

Iran Update, February 28, 2024

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Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

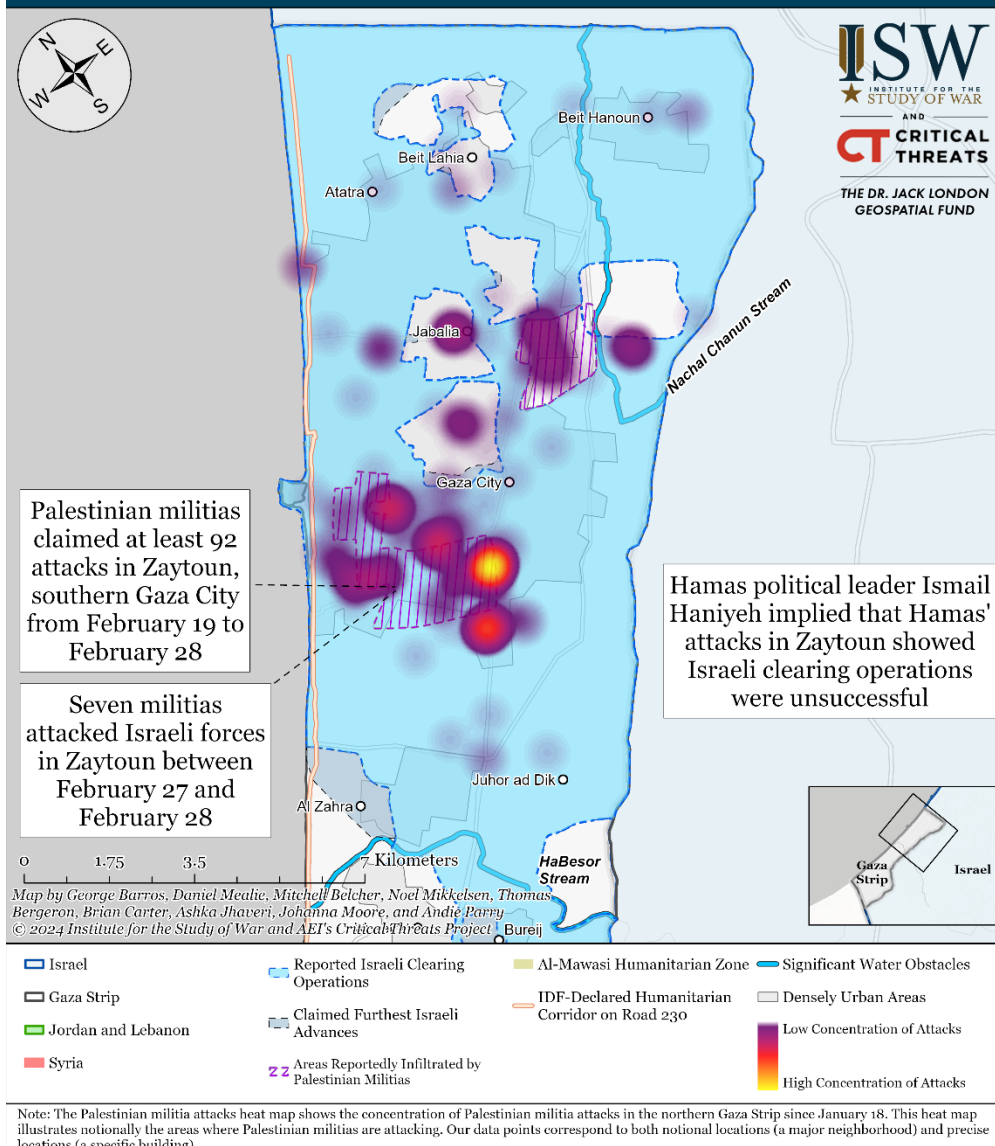
Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report. Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Iran Update.

Palestinian militias have claimed at least 92 attacks targeting Israeli forces in Zaytoun, southeastern Gaza City, between February 19 and February 28.^[1] At least seven Palestinian militias conducted attacks on Israeli forces in Zaytoun on February 27 and 28.^[2] Palestinian militias have targeted Israeli forces with rocket propelled grenades, mortars, explosively-formed penetrators (EFP), improvised explosive devices, small arms, and rockets in Zaytoun since February 19.^[3] These attacks are in response to the ongoing division-sized clearing operation targeting Zaytoun.

This high attack rate involving at least seven Palestinian militias using sophisticated military capabilities indicates that Palestinian fighters have retained military capacity in southern Gaza City despite two Israeli clearing operations there. The militias likely infiltrated into previously cleared areas of southern Gaza City from the uncleared central Gaza Strip. The militias also likely reactivated dormant cells after the Israelis decreased the size of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) contingent in the northern Strip. The IDF said that Hamas' Central and Gaza City Brigades transferred fighters between battalions through tunnel networks.^[4] Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh insinuated on February 28 that Israeli clearing operations in Zaytoun had failed, noting that Hamas' continued attacks in Zaytoun are "the [fiercest] battles" despite Israel's 80-day "occupation."^[5]

Palestinian Militia Attacks in the Northern Gaza Strip between January 18, 2024 and February 28, 2024



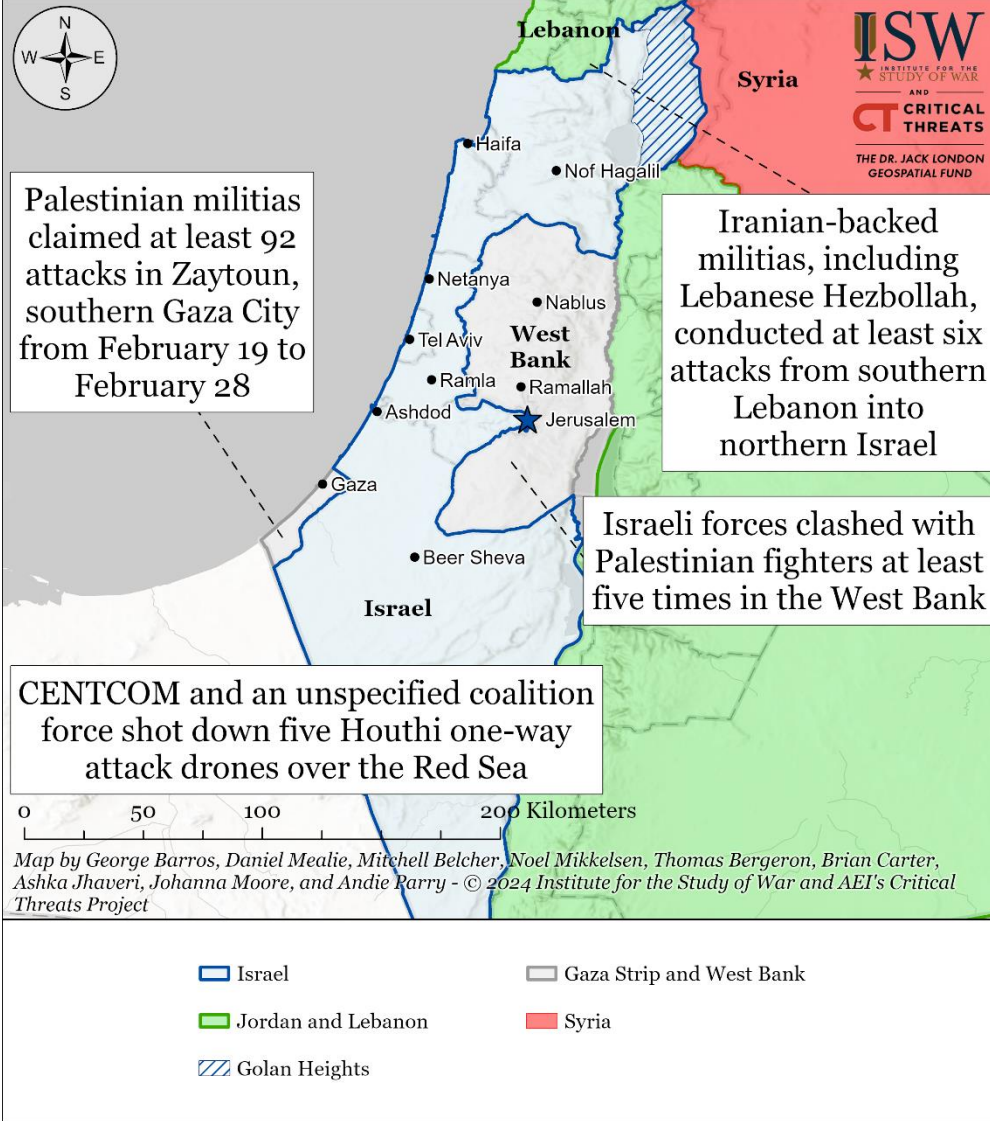
The IDF 162nd Division continued its clearing operation in Zaytoun neighborhood, southeastern Gaza City, on February 28. The IDF Nahal Brigade (assigned to the 162nd Division) killed Palestinian fighters and located weapons in Zaytoun.[6] The Israeli Air Force conducted airstrikes on a Hamas warehouse in Daraj, north of Zaytoun.[7]

Key Takeaways:

- Gaza City:** Palestinian militias have claimed at least 92 attacks targeting Israeli forces in Zaytoun, southeastern Gaza City, between February 19 and February 28. This high attack rate involving at least seven Palestinian militias using sophisticated military capabilities indicates that Palestinian fighters have retained military capacity in southern Gaza City despite two Israeli clearing operations there.

- The militias likely infiltrated into previously cleared areas of southern Gaza City from the uncleared central Gaza Strip. The militias also likely reactivated dormant cells after the Israelis decreased the size of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) contingent in the northern Strip.
- The attacks in Zaytoun are in response to the ongoing division-sized clearing operation targeting Zaytoun. The IDF 162nd Division continued its clearing operation in Zaytoun neighborhood, southeastern Gaza City, on February 28.
- **Rafah:** IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari said on February 27 that Israel seeks to ensure displaced Gazan civilians have access to food, aid, medicine, and hospital facilities in a separate, safer zone before conducting ground operations in Rafah.
- **Negotiations:** Israeli negotiators are expected to leave Qatar on February 29 if there is no significant breakthrough in ceasefire talks, according to two Israeli sources familiar with the process.
- **Yemen:** CENTCOM and an unspecified coalition warship shot down five Houthi one-way attack drones over the Red Sea on February 27.
- **Iraq-Russia:** The Iraqi government may request a sanctions waiver to purchase spare parts for Russian-manufactured helicopters. A Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee member cited by an independent Iraqi news outlet said that there is an “unannounced” effort to resolve the shortage of parts for Iraq’s Russian-made helicopters.

Israel-Hamas War as of February 28, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

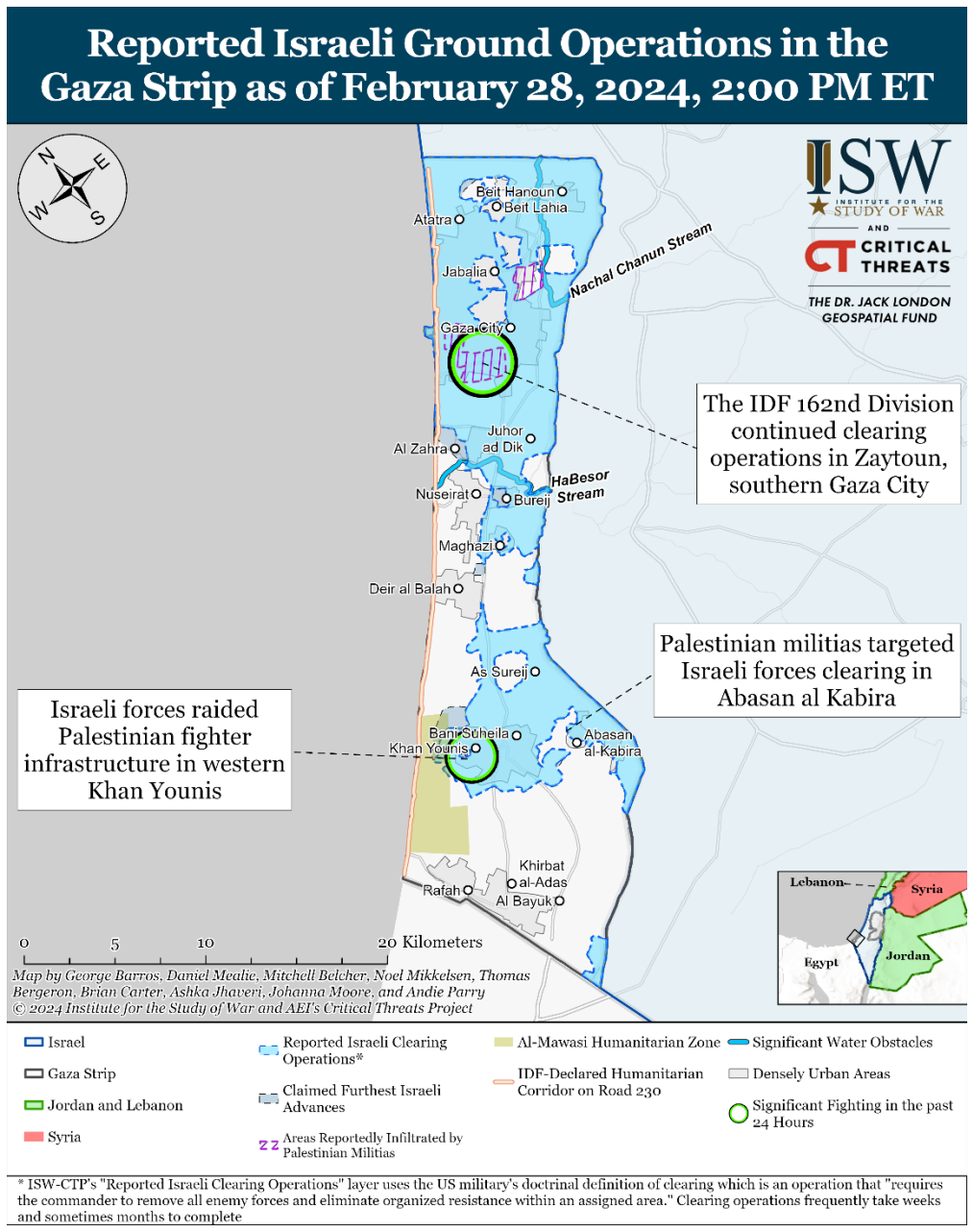
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip
- Degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip.

The IDF continued clearing operations in western Khan Younis on February 28. The IDF 7th Brigade (assigned to the 36th Division) raided militia positions and fired a missile targeting five Palestinian fighters in a vehicle in western Khan Younis.[8] The IDF 35th Paratrooper Brigade also fired sniper rifles at several Palestinian fighters operating in western Khan Younis.[9] The 98th Division directed an airstrike on Palestinian fighters attempting an ambush of Israeli fighters in Khan

Younis.[10] Palestinian militias conducted at least five attacks targeting Israeli forces operating in central and western Khan Younis on February 28.[11]

The IDF Givati Brigade (assigned to the 162nd Division) continued operations in eastern Khan Younis and directed airstrikes targeting two Palestinian fighters on February 28.[12] Hamas fighters pre-placed and detonated two EFPs targeting Israeli tanks operating in Abasan al Kabira on February 28.[13] Hamas and other Palestinian militias claimed small arms clashes with Israeli forces in Abasan al Kabira and north of the town.[14]



Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh gave a rare recorded public address at a conference in Beirut on February 28.[15] Haniyeh claimed that Hamas has displayed flexibility in negotiations but remains ready to continue fighting.[16] He also warned Israel against imposing additional restrictions for Muslims on access to the al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan and called on Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and the West Bank to march on al Aqsa Mosque on the first day of Ramadan, which begins around March 10.[17] Some far-right Israeli ministers have proposed restricting access to the al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, but Israel has not announced a new policy.[18]

IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari said on February 27 that Israel seeks to ensure displaced Gazan civilians have access to food, aid, medicine, and hospital facilities in a separate, safer zone before conducting ground operations in Rafah.[19] Israel facilitated the airdrop of aid into Khan Younis and access to the northern Gaza Strip for 31 aid trucks on February 27.[20] Israel is reportedly still considering opening a direct aid crossing from Israel into the northern Gaza Strip to increase aid flows.[21]

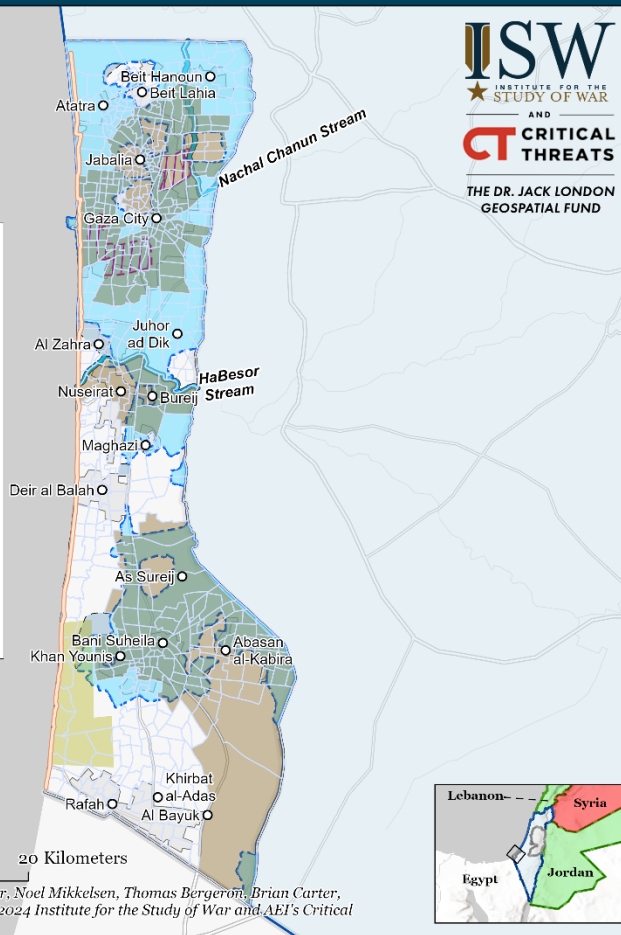
Russian state media confirmed that Fatah and Hamas officials will meet in Moscow on February 29 to discuss the formation of a new Palestinian government.[22] Hamas has not independently confirmed its attendance. A senior Hamas delegation last traveled to Moscow in late October 2023 to meet with Russian and Iranian officials.[23] Some smaller political factions actively fighting Israeli forces in Gaza, like the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement, criticized the meeting for excluding other Palestinian groups.[24] Fatah leaders gave unoptimistic statements to media organizations about the meeting.[25] The Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al Maliki said that he does not expect “miracles to happen” and added that the time is not right for a “national coalition government” or a government that includes Hamas. Maliki cited the risk of an international boycott against any government including Hamas.[26] Russia has framed itself as a possible mediator between Israel and Hamas.[27]

Israeli negotiators are expected to leave Qatar on February 29 if there is no significant breakthrough in ceasefire talks, according to two Israeli sources familiar with the process.[28] Reuters reported on February 27 that the parties are discussing the latest “Paris Proposal” that would require both Israel and the Palestinian militias to completely stop their military operations in the Gaza Strip. The latest proposal would also force Israel to pause aerial surveillance in the Strip for eight hours daily and reposition IDF units away from densely populated areas. The proposal would allow the gradual return of all displaced civilians except military aged males to the northern Gaza Strip.[29] Hamas would release 40 female, child, and elderly hostages in exchange for approximately 400 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel under the latest proposal.[30] Israel would also commit to bring in 500 humanitarian aid trucks per day, 200,000 tents, 60,000 caravans, fuel, and heavy machinery to rehabilitate hospitals and bakeries in the Gaza Strip.[31] Hamas representatives have reportedly not provided a full response to the proposal.[32] Hamas Political Bureau member Muhammad Nazal said on February 28 that “there is no escaping the end of the war” but that Hamas does not have to agree to “the first stage of the deal.”[33]

Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip as of February 28, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

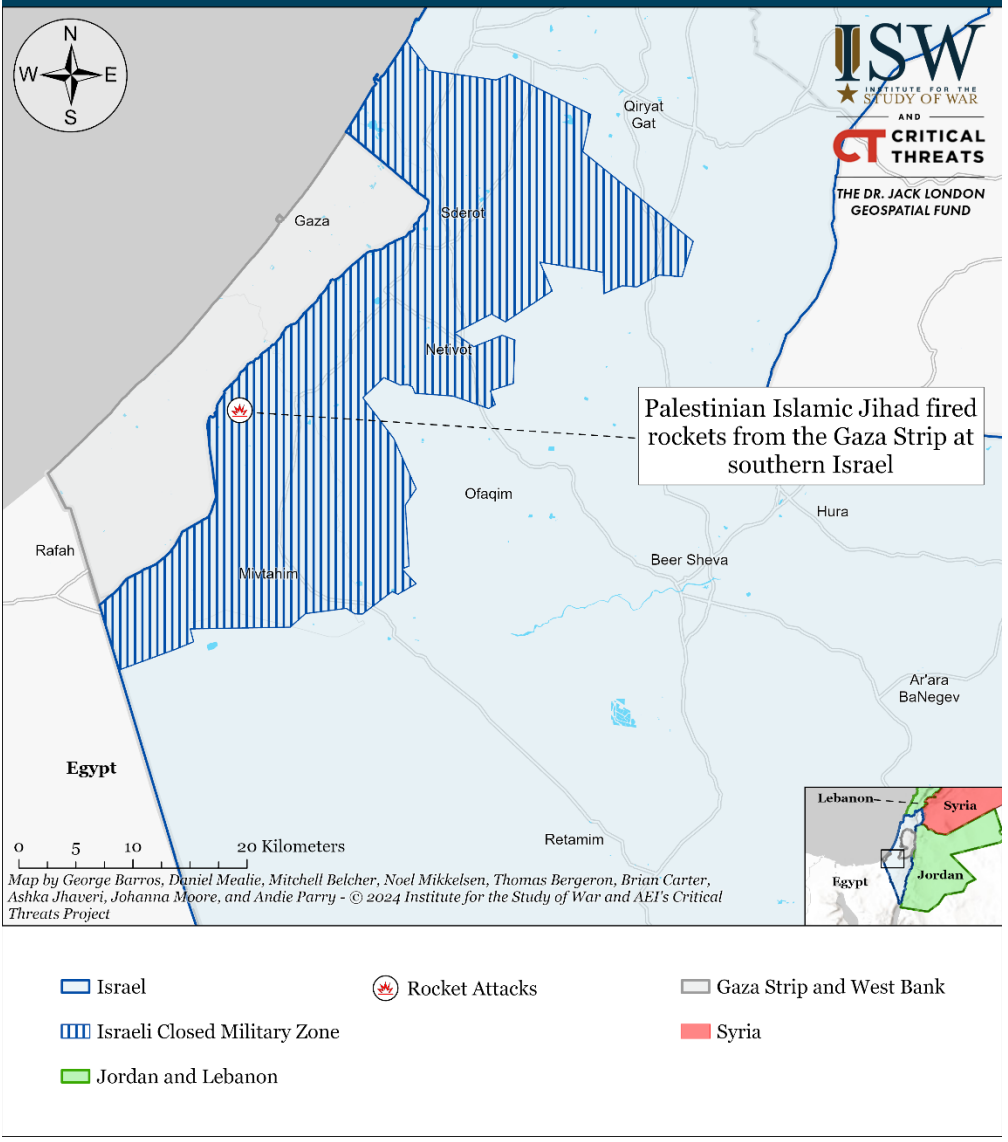
- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias
- Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
- Densely Urban Areas
- Significant Water Obstacles

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired a rocket barrage from the Gaza Strip targeting Kissufim in southern Israel on February 28.[34]

The IDF Gaza Division and Southern Command directed airstrikes in Central Gaza targeting eight "significant targets," including a PIJ rocket launcher used to attack Ashkelon on February 27.[35]

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of February 28, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



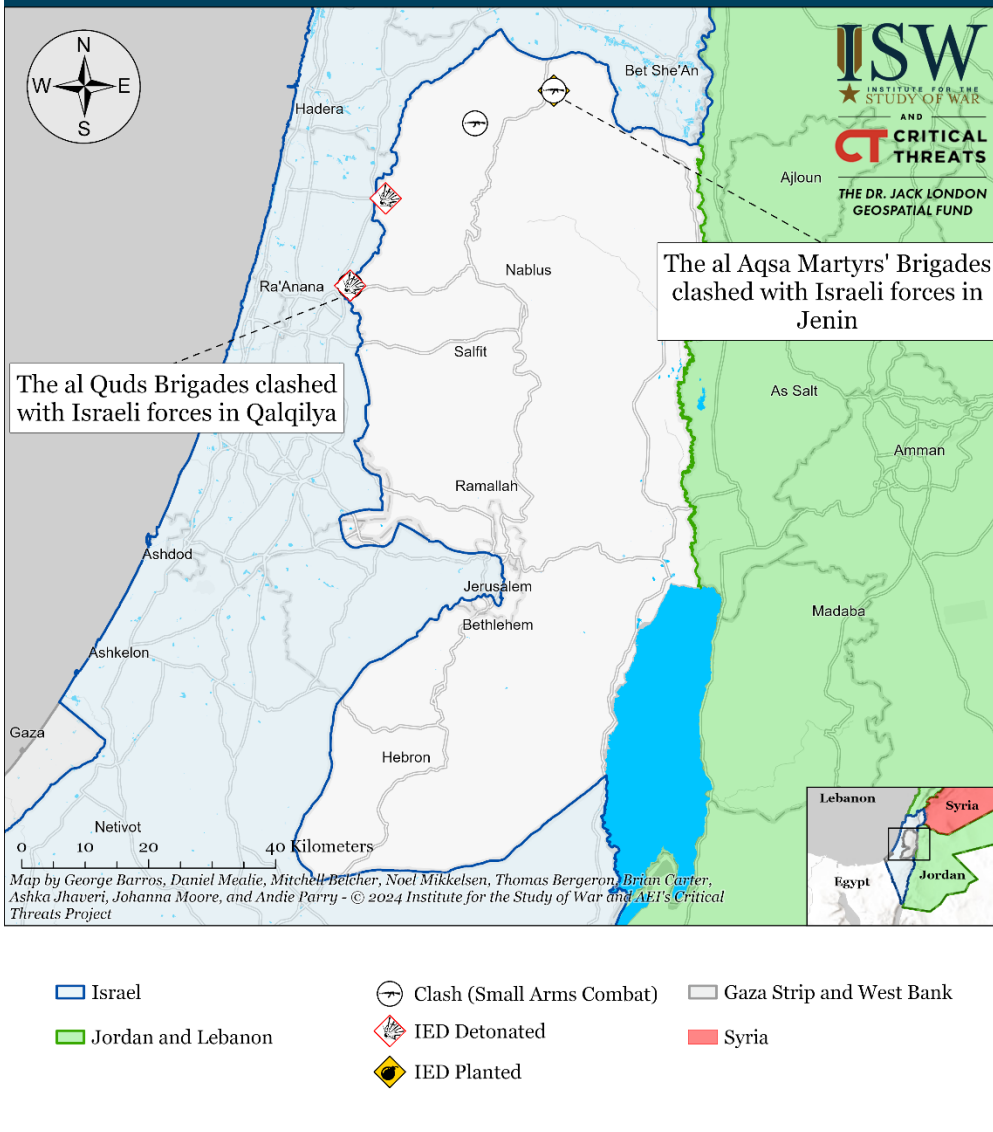
West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters at least five times in the West Bank on February 28.[36]

Clashes in the West Bank as of February 28, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

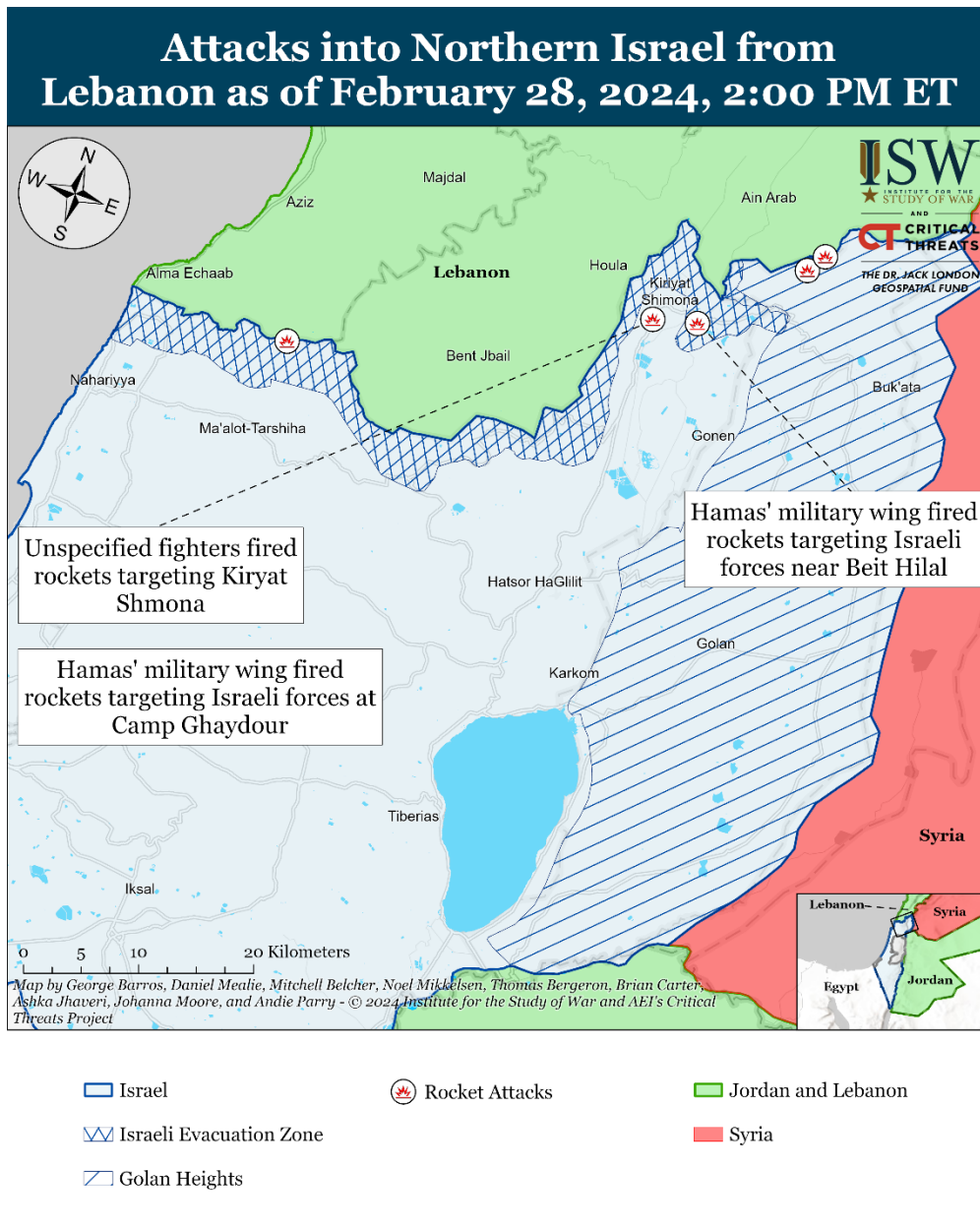
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel and fix them there
- Set conditions for successive campaigns into northern Israel

Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, has conducted at least six attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on February 27.[37] Hamas' military wing said that it fired 40 rockets targeting two Israeli positions in northern Israel.[38] The IDF said that only 15 of the rockets that Hamas fired crossed into Israeli territory. One of the rockets damaged a home in the area.[39]

Unspecified sources familiar with Lebanese Hezbollah decisionmaking told Reuters on February 27 that the group will stop attacks on northern Israel if Hamas agrees to a ceasefire.[40] Hamas is currently considering a proposal that would include a six-week truce with Israel.[41]



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Demonstrate the capability and willingness of Iran and the Axis of Resistance to escalate against the United States and Israel on multiple fronts

- Set conditions to fight a regional war on multiple fronts

The Iraqi government may request a sanctions waiver to purchase spare parts for Russian-manufactured helicopters.[42] A Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee member cited by an independent Iraqi news outlet said that there is an “unannounced” effort to resolve the shortage of parts for Iraq’s Russian-made helicopters. The US Department of Defense Inspector General’s Q3 Report on Operation Inherent Resolve said that “sanctions related to the war in Ukraine have prevented the acquisition of new parts [for Russian-produced helicopters].”[43] The report added that most of Iraq’s Russian-manufactured helicopters are not airworthy due to “maintenance constraints, outdated systems, and lack of available spare parts.”[44] Russian Ambassador to Iraq Elbrus Kutrashv has discussed security cooperation with several senior Iraqi political and military officials in a series of meetings since late January 2024. CTP-ISW assessed on February 20 that Russia may be setting conditions to supplant the United States as Iraq’s security partner in anticipation of the United States possibly reducing its military presence in Iraq.[45]

An unspecified “judicial source” told Iraqi Kurdish media that Iraq’s Federal Supreme Court rejected a lawsuit on February 28 that attempted to invalidate Parliament Speaker nominee Shaalan al Karim’s candidacy.[46] The Iraqi Federal Supreme Court stated that the lawsuit does not fall under the court’s jurisdiction. Iranian-backed Iraqi politicians filed a lawsuit on January 13 to invalidate Karim’s candidacy as part of their efforts to install their preferred candidate, Mahmoud al Mashhadani, as speaker.[47]

The Sistan and Baluchistan Province prosecutor said that two unspecified “terrorist operatives” attempted to conduct attacks targeting Iranian security officials in Bampur on February 28.[48] The two fighters attempted to target an Iranian security forces patrol near an Iranian checkpoint in Bampur. The fighters prematurely detonated their explosives, killing one fighter.[49] This incident is part of an uptick in anti-regime militancy in southeastern Iran since December 2023. Jaish al Adl—a Balochi, Salafi-jihadi group operating along the Iran-Pakistan border—has conducted at least five attacks targeting Iranian security personnel since December 2023.[50] The Iranian Law Enforcement Command killed a purportedly Jaish al Adl-affiliated individual in Bampur City on January 8.[51] The Afghan branch of the Islamic State separately conducted a terrorist attack in Kerman Province in early January 2024, killing over 90 individuals.[52]

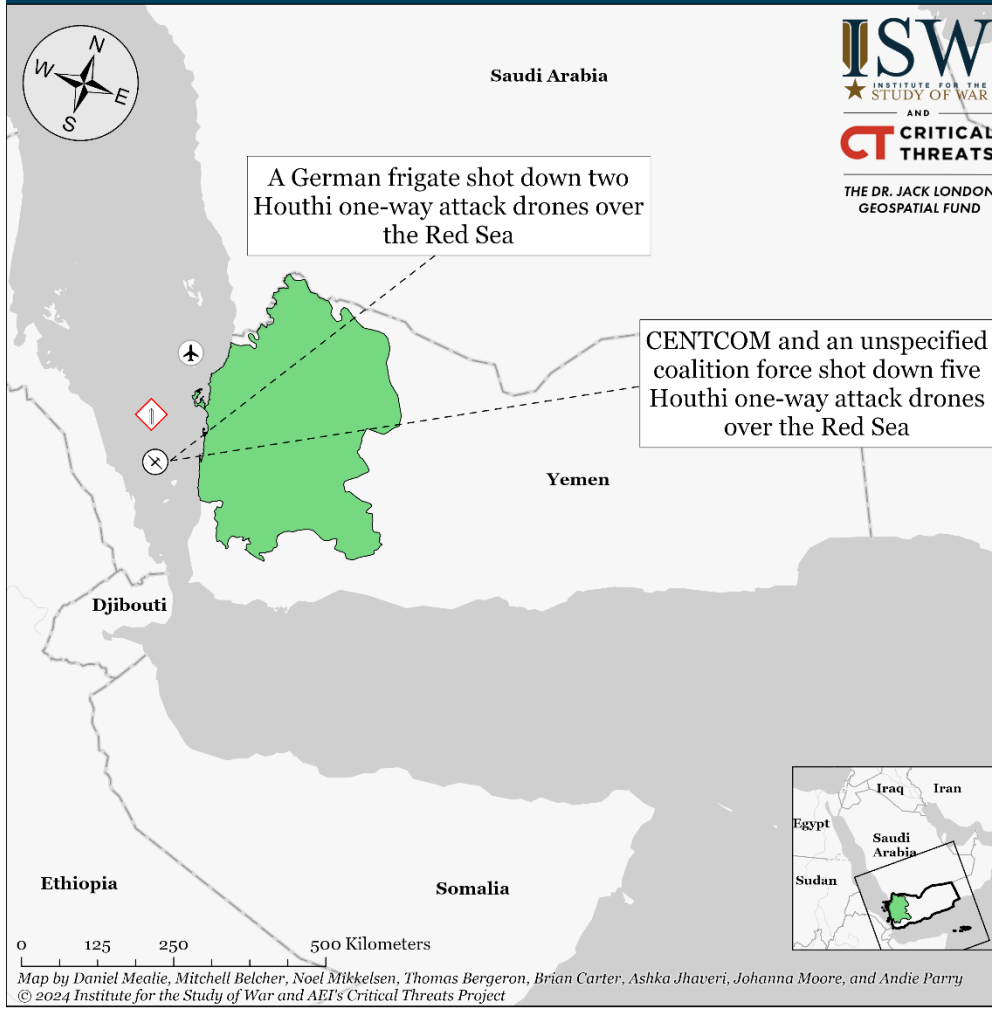
The Iranian communications and information technology minister announced on February 28 that Russia will launch the Iranian *Pars-1* satellite into orbit on February 29.[53] Iranian state media claimed that Russia will use its *Soyuz* space launch vehicle to launch the *Pars-1* into low earth orbit.[54] Russia similarly launched a *Kanopus-V* satellite—alternatively referred to as the *Khayyam* in Iran—into orbit in August 2022 on Iran’s behalf.[55] The IRGC Aerospace Force Command and Iranian Space Organization separately launched multiple Iranian satellites into low-earth orbit between April 2020 and January 2024.[56] Iran can use satellites capable of collecting imagery to help enable targeting capabilities for attacks abroad.[57] Iranian state media reported in July 2020 that the IRGC used its satellites to collect intelligence on US military positions in the region.[58]

CENTCOM and an unspecified coalition warship shot down five Houthi one-way attack drones over the Red Sea on February 27.[59] CENTCOM said that the drones presented an “imminent” threat to vessels in the Red Sea.

The German frigate *Hessen* shot down two Houthi one-way attack drones over the Red Sea on February 27.[60] The *Hessen* identified a suspicious target over the Red Sea on February 26 but did not successfully intercept the target.[61] It is unclear if the *Hessen* is the unspecified coalition warship noted by CENTCOM.

A Houthi-controlled media outlet said that the United States and United Kingdom targeted Houthi sites on Labwan Island, off the coast of Hudaydah, on February 27.[62] Neither the United States nor the United Kingdom have confirmed the strikes.

Houthi-controlled Territory in Yemen as of February 28, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



- Houthi-controlled Territory in Yemen
- Surface-to-Surface Missile
- ✕ Drone Strike
- ✈ Airstrike

Note: This notional map is not a definitive assessment of areas under Houthi control in Yemen. This map is primarily an illustrative reference material and does not adhere to the very high level of spatial precision that ISW and CTP uses for our Israel-Hamas and Ukraine control of terrain maps.

[1] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17475>

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[2] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1695> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17507> ; https://t.me/kataeb_moqawma/4149 ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/5864 ; <https://t.me/darebmojahden/4479> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/218379> ; <https://t.me/abualiajel/141>

[3] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1695> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17507> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17497> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1679> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17495> ; <https://t.me/mojahdeenpal/4253>

[4] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762164907296915668>

[5] <https://t.me/hamasps/19641> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/19636>

[6] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762730896753357021>

[7] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762730896753357021>
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[8] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762730765408747889>
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[9] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762730837357842917>

[10] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762730848128745489>

[11] https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/5860 ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1689> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1690> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17506> ; <https://t.me/darebmojahden/4480>

[12] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762730848128745489>

[13] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1688>

[14] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17505> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1688> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1687> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/5859 ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17508>

[15] <https://t.me/hamasps/19641>

[16] ; <https://t.me/hamasps/19636> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/19637> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/19638> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/19639> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/19640>

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[18] https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/sidelining-ben-gvir-war-cabinet-rejects-ramadan-restrictions-on-arab-israelis-at-temple-mount/ ; https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/authorities-warned-of-unrest-if-muslims-barred-from-temple-mount-on-ramadan/

[19] https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-02-28-24/h_9e9430b505b7f371ca20d8a5ad33d27c

[20] https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/cogat-says-31-trucks-carrying-food-entered-northern-gaza/ ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1762790854014447890>

[21] https://twitter.com/kann_news/status/1762715067995361619

[22] <https://sputnikarabic dot ae/20240228/%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%83%D9%88-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B6%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A7-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B4-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9---1086476579.html>

[23] <https://ria dot ru/20231026/khamas-1905438005.html>

[24] <https://t.me/darebmojahden/4481>

[25] https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-02-28-24/h_3d1cfc5b1b86aefd3c45f7521fa6f27d ; <https://www.jpost dot com/breaking-news/article-789348> ; https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/hamas-fatah-officials-to-meet-in-moscow-for-talks-on-potential-unity-government-gaza-reconstruction/

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